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Flesh and Blood in the Treatises on the *Arbor Consanguinitatis* (Thirteenth to Sixteenth Centuries)

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Introduction

One might think that kinship in pre-modern Europe, despite its importance in practice, has never become a prominent subject of philosophical thought. While there is an ancient—and to this day uninterrupted—Western tradition of writing books with titles such as *De Amicitia* or *De Amore*, there are no comparable classics called *On Kinship*. Since the high Middle Ages, there has, however, been a tradition of systematic reflection on kinship in the context of the Catholic prohibitions of sexual intercourse among kin. I am thinking of commentaries on the kinship-diagrams that lawyers used to determine whether a kin-connection fell under incest prohibitions (Fig. 1). These diagrams often referred to as *arbores consanguinitatis* first emerged in manuscripts of the *Etymologiae* by Isidor of Seville.[1] From the late twelfth century onward, the *arbores* became a standard supplement to canon law manuscripts. Consequently, they were, much like textual passages of canon law, time and again commented on, whether in the form of a few paragraphs in comprehensive *Summae* on canon law, or, from the fourteenth century onward, also in short specialized treatises that dealt exclusively with the kinship diagrams. Although such commentaries have come down to us in large numbers, they have received little attention by modern historians. They stand in an intellectual tradition that was legal, rather than philosophical, operational, rather than conceptual, and relied on visual as much as on verbal means of expression. The commentaries assumed different functions. Most described the individual parts of the diagram and explained what these stood for. Some, moreover, gave instructions as to how to draw such diagrams and

how to use them in reckoning kinship. But the commentaries also addressed more fundamental problems. Most provided definitions of consanguinity and affinity, discussed why incest was prohibited, and how this was related to the nature of kinship ties. Some went even further and related kinship to a larger cosmology. Throughout the later Middle Ages the commentaries appeared at short intervals. New ones often added a few novel sentences or paragraphs to bulks of texts that were more or less literally copied from one of their predecessors. The authors frequently engaged in dialogues, quoting, glossing, correcting, or contradicting each other. The content of the treatises changed in small steps, but these eventually added up to quite dramatic changes in the manner kinship was conceptualized between the thirteenth and the early sixteenth century.

Among the things that changed radically are the manners in which the treatises addressed questions about the bodily substances kin share. The very name of one of the diagrams, *arbor consanguinitatis*, could lead one to believe that blood at all times had been the principal substance. But this is not the case. The diagram's name *arbor consanguinitatis* was a legacy from ancient Rome that had lost most of its original semantic context by the high Middle Ages.[2] Comments on blood were largely absent from the texts written around 1200, which confirms the observations according to which blood metaphors played a subordinate role in discourses about kinship during the early and central Middle Ages.[3] Only towards the passage to the early modern period did the treatises refer ever more frequently to blood. It is perhaps no coincidence that the topic of *arbor*, tree, went through a similar development. As Christiane Klapisch has demonstrated, it was not before the end of the Middle Ages that the *arbor*-diagrams were drawn so that they looked like trees nor, as I can add, that the texts of the comments made more than passing reference to their resemblance with trees.[4] This alone indicates that the emergence of a discussion about blood in the

treatises needs to be related to additional changes in the interpretation of the diagram—and of the kin relations it stood for.

Flesh and blood in the scholarly tradition of the Middle Ages can neither be equated with metaphors nor with biological facts in the modern sense of these terms. Instead, we have to assume a system of knowledge, radically different from ours, in which descriptions of natural entities (such as animals, plants, flesh or–for that matter–blood) were not separated from descriptions of the symbolic meanings attributed to them.[5] Despite such ruptures, Western academic thinking about the substances of kinship might feature some lines of continuity going back to the Middle Ages. One of them might be the stress on the immutability of the substances kin share. This stands in contrast to examples of Melanesian and other people that Janet Carsten has pointed to who attribute great convertibility and mutability to the substances that related people share, for instance in that people who eat together come to have similar blood.[6] Comparable views were probably expressed in the Middle Ages, since they were rigorously refuted by academics such as Thomas Aquinas. His (or his students') *Supplementum* argued against the doctrine that since blood (as Aristotle thought) is made from the surplus of food, our blood might have more in common with things we eat than with the blood of our parents who engendered us. This, Thomas says, would only hold according to the false opinion that all forms are accidents.[7] But the immutability of substance can play many different roles in the conceptualization of relationships, and such roles certainly also depend on whether the substance in question is flesh, blood, or— for that matter—biogenetic material.[8]

Altogether several dozen different treatises on kinship diagrams are known to have been written in the period between the thirteenth and the early sixteenth centuries. Any attempt to establish their exact number faces major difficulties. First, many of the treatises share large amounts of identical text, which complicates any attempt to determine when a

redaction can be seen as a separate text. Second, only few of the texts are easily accessible. Apart from the prominent treatise written by the Bolognese lawyer Johannes Andreae at the beginning of the fourteenth century, almost none are available in proper modern editions.[9] A good handful of treatises found their way into early prints, while a great many are accessible in manuscript form only. Quite generally, the diagrams contained in these manuscripts have been examined far more thoroughly than the texts that comment upon them.[10] The latter remain a largely unexplored territory, and what follows will be no more than a first glimpse into a rich intellectual tradition.

For the purpose of this paper, I have only been able to analyze a small sample of easily accessible texts from different corners of Europe. These include the relevant passages of some well-known comprehensive commentaries on topics of canon law such as the *Summa de Matrimonio* by the Bolognese lawyer Tancred (c. 1210), the Catalan Raymundus de Pennaforte's *Summa de Poenitentia et Matrimonio* (c.1235), Goffredus Tranensis *Summa super Titulis Decretalium (1243)*, as well as the *Summa* by the Piedmontese Henricus de Segusio, better known as Hostiensis (1253), the *Summa Thelogica* of Thomas of Aquinas, in particular its posthumous *Supplementum* (last third of thirteenth century) and the *Summa Confessorum* (1298) by Johannes de Friburgo from the German Southwest. More typical of the younger generation of commentaries are the specialized treatises dealing exclusively with the diagrams, such as the *Lectura arborum consanguinitatis et affinitaits* by Johannes Hispanicus Egitanensis, and the treatises with similar names by Johannes Andreae (1308), Prosdocimus de Comitibis (fifteenth century), Henricus Greve, and Johannes Cyntholtz (both early sixteenth century). This sample allows putting forward first, tentative hypotheses on changes of a discourse that was highly specialized and took place in a narrow circle of lawyers but that may nevertheless point to some broader shifts in the understanding of kinship.[11]

In what follows, I will approach major trends in the development of these commentaries in two steps. First, I will examine changes in notions of what the *arbor consanguinitatis* represented. The second part traces the slow, gradual emergence of the topic of blood in the treatises. Toward the end of the chapter, I will try to relate these changes to a few general developments in the social organization and in the cultural perception of kinship at the passage to the modern period.

As a last preliminary remark, I would like to simply mention another shift in the treatises that this paper cannot discuss at length. The commentaries relied ever more heavily on the visual explanatory power of the diagram. Authors writing in the early thirteenth century still explained how to reckon kinship degrees without ever referring to the actual diagram and the support it could provide for this purpose.[12] Johannes Hispanicus Egitanensis, writing in the mid-thirteenth century, was among the first to explicitly praise the diagrams for facilitating kinship reckoning. He underlines his point by quoting a passage from Horace saying that people believe more easily what they see than what they hear. Johannes also gives instructions on how to draw the diagrams and on how, in their absence, one could help oneself by using one's fingers and their joints to reckon kin.[13] Finally Hostiensis, in his *Summa* from 1253, reminds future doctors of canon law that when they have to teach incest prohibitions, they should sit down in front of their students, open their books at the page with the diagram, point to the pertinent cells and branches, and take care to address topics in the order of their appearance in the diagram.[14] The growing reliance on the interplay of text, or speech, and pictorial diagrams might even have affected the contents of the treatises. One is tempted to ask whether some of the new ideas in the more recent treatises emerged because preconceptions inherent to the diagrams eventually unfolded their potential. It will take an additional paper to further explore how attempts to visualize kinship affected its understanding.

From Relation to Group

A first set of changes in the treatises has to do with what the commentators think the *arbores consanguinitatis* and *affinitatis* represent. All authors primarily dealt with the diagram as a representation of the numerous possible dyadic kin-relationships. Only the later authors saw in the diagram moreover a model of an actual group of interrelated kin. The latter perception also suggests itself to our own eyes, because we are accustomed to reading modern family trees. We tend to associate the interlinked cells to members of an actual kin group, expanding out from a core formed by a father, a mother, and their children. While kinship diagrams probably served as the model on which modern family trees came to be cast from the fifteenth century onward, they were very far from operating like family trees to begin with. The early commentaries suggest that they were used more like gauges with which to measure the closeness of a connection between two kinsmen or like field guides that helped identify what category a given connection could be subsumed under.

The proper use of the *arbores consaguinitatis* required specific skills in what could be termed kinship-calculus or kinship-combinatorics. It was a main goal of almost all treatises on the *arbores* to teach such skills. This is made very clear in the *enigmata*, the riddles, or more appropriately exercises, contained in the manuscripts of some fifteenth century commentaries (Fig. 2). These exercises taught students to use kinship diagrams in order to make constellations transparent that appear to be overly convoluted when expressed in words. A comparatively easy example is this: "Two fathers and two sons go hunting. They catch three rabbits, and each carries one home." In the chart it becomes immediately evident how the seeming paradox in this statement can be resolved.[15] In kinship calculus, two fathers and two sons do not always add up to four people, but might as well be no more than three, with the one in the middle being a father as well as a son. Or, to take a slightly more complicated

example: A count had twelve knights, four of which were his sons, four his brothers-in-law, and the remaining four his sons-in-law, but all were born from one woman. Here, it takes two charts to give a hint as to how to solve the riddle (Fig. 3). The count has four sisters and four daughters. After his wife's death he marries a widow with eight sons. These marry his four sisters and his four daughters, and in addition he has four sons with his second wife. These riddles do not seem to emerge in manuscripts before the fifteenth century. But they may have been around in the practice of teaching for some time and are characteristic of what has been a main concern of the treatises all along, namely to convey skills in identifying and discerning types of kin relationships, and in kinship reckoning.

Between the thirteenth and the fifteenth century, the diagrams were no longer read solely in terms of individual kinship relations and their combinatorics, but also as the representation of a coherent group, as one enlarged family. I see at least three different indicators of such a change. The first one is a debate about what to call the central cell in the diagram, the second the emergence of comparisons between the diagram and an organically grown tree, and the third the rise of new debates about the outer limits of kinship.

With regard to the first, it is probably the expression of an incipient uncertainty as to how to read the *arbores* when the authors began to engage in a debate about the name of the middle-cell in the diagram, the one anthropologists today would refer to as *ego* (Fig. 4). The old commentaries up to those by Tancred and Pennaforte did not address this question at all. Johannes Egitanensis, in the middle of the thirteenth century, however, mentions three different names for the middle cell: Truncus, which is Latin for stem, as well as two male first names, Proteus or Joachim.[16]

Johannes explains each of these names. Some call the cell stem because the entire tree rests on it – or as we might add: ramifies out from (the stem was here not thought of as the representation of the older generation such as in a modern genealogical tree). Others,

Johannes continues, call the cell Proteus, after the herdsman of the sea-beasts in ancient Greek mythology who can change his face. Unlike the other cells in the diagram that unambiguously stand for one single denomination, say, "father," "grandfather" and so on, the middle cell has no stable denomination. It becomes "son" when related to "father," but "nephew" when related to "uncle." Calling the cell Proteus, thus corresponds to the perception of the diagram as the representation of the panoply of possible kinship constellations.

Johannes Egitaneus goes on to explain that some scholars call the middle-cell Joachim, i.e. by the name of the husband of Ann, the mother of the holy Virgin. Ann and Joachim stand at the center of the so-called Holy Kinship, a genealogical network that is complicated, given the fact that Ann according to the legend had been married three times and was ancestress of not only Christ, but also of Simon, Judas, John the Evangelist, and others.[17] Calling the middle cell Joachim suggested that the *arbor consanguinitatis* represents an actual kin-group, namely, in the first place, the one of Christ, which in turn could stand as a model for any kin-group. Against the background of contemporary pious practices, calling the middle cell Joachim probably had additional symbolic implications. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries witnessed a spread of devotional images of the Holy Kinship that served as tools in meditative practices during which the believer imagined becoming a member of the Holy Kinship.[18] Similarly, in order to use an *arbor,* one had to identify with the middle cell, so to speak to become Joachim, an operation that can hardly have been free of reminiscences of pious practices with an underlying symbolism of being inserted into the Holy Kinship.

Maybe in order to avoid such suggestive symbolism, Johannes Andreae, perpaps the fourteenth century's most famous teacher of Roman Law, suggested yet another denomination. He called the middle cell Petruccio after his beadle – probably to make it clear that the middle cell could be just anybody.[19] Most authors writing after Andreae embraced this proposal. One joked that he would call the cell simply "beadle," given that he – as

opposed to the great professor Andreae–had no beadle of his own to name it after.[20] But this did not deter later authors from also taking up again the tradition of calling the cell Joachim and to make explicit references to the Holy Kinship.[21]

Second, there probably is a connection between the trend to read the *arbor consanguinitatis* as the representation of a coherent kin group and its novel interpretation as a tree. As Christiane Klapisch-Zuber has demonstrated, the *arbores* were conceived of as actual trees only at the passage to the modern period. Even the early treatises referred to the diagrams' stems and branches, but only the late ones went further in comparing it to an actual tree, sometimes even a specific species of tree, and also referred to its leaves, roots, and fruits or addressed how it could be made to grow or thrive.[22] That the kinship diagram no longer was seen as a mere assemblage of conceivable constellations, but as one, organically grown living being, indicates that something new is being represented, a coherent group such that every cell in the diagram is related to every other.

Diagrams that looked like actual trees did not become common until the fifteenth century (Fig. 5). Previously, many diagrams remained abstract networks of related cells. Others were projected onto a human body, such that the middle cell was located at the pelvis and the descending generations at each joint of the legs, while the ascending ones, the ancestors, were positioned at the joints from the shoulders down the arm to the fingertips. At the end of the Middle Ages these bodies were successively replaced by tree shaped forms. An additional step was the introduction of the so called *arbores conversae*, where the traditional diagram was turned on its head, so that the part below no longer represented the middle cell's descendants, but its ancestors. Such a representation made it even easier to equate the diagram with a kin group in which each new generation grows out of an older one. This is the form that was to become constitutive for the modern genealogical tree. Here, the organic growth of the tree could be juxtaposed with the succession of interrelated generations. Some diagrams

from around 1500 borrow heavily from the iconography of the tree from which the Christ's cross was made. Like that tree, the *arbores* were sometimes shown as growing out of Adam's skull or to be watered and cared for by God the Father and Mary. In these instances the tree seems to stand for the successive generations of Christianity at large.[23]

The third indicator of changes in the interpretation of the diagrams is that the treatises expressed growing concern with the outer limits of kinship. The old treatises I have looked at, such the ones of Tancred and Pennaforte, quite simply stated that all kinship ends in the seventh degree, i.e. in the degree to which incest prohibitions in canon law had extended before the reform of 1215. From the middle of the thirteenth century onward, some authors declared that this only applied to the collateral line, whereas they held kinship to be unlimited in the direct line of descent. As a consequence, Johannes Egitaneus wrote, Adam, if he were still alive today, could marry no woman at all, because they all descend from him in direct line. A great number of the succeeding authors repeated this one sentence. It seems to have worried no one until Prosdocimus de Comitibus in the fifteenth century. He inferred that if this were true, all men would be kin. This, he wrote, would be ridiculous, because it would imply that there was kinship between Christians, Muslims, and Jews as well.[24] Early sixteenth-century authors such as Heinrich Greve and Cyntholtz repeated that all men are kin and seem less worried about this—probably because they thought of kinship in a new way, namely in terms of shared blood that was rapidly diminishing with growing genealogical distance.

From Flesh to Blood

A second major transition affected the manner in which the treatises described the bodily dimensions of kinship. Here, roughly speaking, an interest in flesh was successively overlaid by one in blood. Of course, even the oldest treatises I have looked at made at least passing

reference to the connection between consanguinity, Latin *consanguinitas,* and the word *sanguis*, blood. Hardly any author failed to use the etymology of con-sanguinity as one of several approaches to its meaning. Consanguines, wrote already Tancred at the beginning of the thirteenth century, are *quasi communem habentes sanguinem vel de una sanguine producentes*, "consanguines are so to say those who have common blood or those who have come from one blood."[25] Variations of this sentence that can be traced back to Isidor of Seville writing in the seventh century recur in almost all treatises on the *arbor consanguinitatis* written later on. But most treatises written before the fifteenth century left it at that. They neither asked what was meant by blood in this context and how it could be shared with others or passed on to the next generation, nor did they explore the metaphorical potential of an equation of blood and kinship. This is all the more surprising as the medical and physiological discourse since Antiquity had been highlighting blood as the substance that was getting merged under sexual intercourse and from which embryos were built. This ultimately applied to both the theories of generation standing in the Galenic tradition and those standing in the Aristotelian.[26] But the medical discourse stressing blood seems at first to have had very little impact on the legal reflections about kinship, incest, and impediments of marriage.

Quite generally, the early treatises were dominated by a discourse that was less concerned with blood than with flesh. Another definition of consanguinity that almost all authors repeated is that consanguinity is the bond between people who descend from the same person by *propagatio carnalis*,[27] i.e. by fleshly reproduction. Similarly, the foremost concern of passages that discussed how affinity comes into existence did not talk about mixing blood, but about unifying flesh, using expressions such as *carnali copula* or *carnalis commixtio*.[28] The Supplementum to Thomas Aquinas even feels compelled to explain why it is appropriate to talk about consanguinity, rather than about carnality, *carnalitas*.

Also the famous constitution passed by the Fourth Lateran council (1215) that reduced marriage prohibitions from the seventh to the fourth degree of consanguinity highlighted not primarily blood, but several different components of the body. The constitution says it is appropriate to prohibit bodily intercourse up to the fourth degree of consanguinity, because there are four different fluids (*humores*) in the body, which consists of four elements.[29] The council thus tied the prohibitions of intercourse into a larger cosmology in which the number four plays a prominent role. Johannes Andreae who commented on the constitution about a hundred years later, briefly after 1300, admitted that the argument was based on similarity, rather than cogent logic. But he nevertheless added even more analogies. The prohibition until the fourth degree, he wrote, corresponds also to the four seasons, the four evangelists, the four rivers of paradise, and the four doctors of the church.[30] Only Thomas Aquinas made an attempt at explaining the text of the constitution in terms of blood that loses ever more of its identity as it is mixed with other blood in each generation.[31] But this thought has not, as far as I can see up to this point, been taken up by any of the treatises on the *arbores* written before the fifteenth century.

For the most part, blood loomed larger in the newer texts. Where old texts had written about *copula carnalis*, the new ones wrote about *commixtio sanguinis*, the mixing of blood. A telling detail is the emergence of new interpretations of the kinship diagram, in which the authors now actually saw symbols of blood. Since the thirteenth century, most authors who explained the diagram focussed on the dots contained in each cell in order to indicate kinship degrees according to the two incongruent methods of reckoning in canon and Roman law. In most diagrams red dots located on top of each cell indicate the degree according to Canon law, black ones at the bottom the one according to Roman law (Fig. 6). Many authors repeat that the dots referring to Canon law are painted in red in order to indicate the greater excellence of canon law. Implicitly, this argument probably refers to the political symbolism

of purple as color of majesty. Prosdocimus de Comitibus in the early fifteenth century goes on, explaining that red as a color is superior to black because the latter contains less light.[32] In contrast, later treatises, such as the one of Cyntholtz, written at the beginning of the sixteenth century, associate red with blood as if this were the most natural thing of the world. Because, explains Cyntholtz, "the canon law punctuation indicates consanguinity that comes from blood that by its nature is red, but Roman law cares about nothing but inheritance, which occurs after death, hence it is appropriate to refer to the latter by black or dark dots."[33]

The more the treatises accentuated blood as the constitutive substance of consanguinity, the greater their interest in the details of when and how substances merged under sexual intercourse. The treatises had always made passing reference to sex, primarily as the act that constitutes affinity—according to canon law even if it was illicit. But before the fifteenth century, only a few authors had discussed sexual practices in detail. Among the few exceptions were Raymundus de Pennaforte in 1235, and his glossator Johannes de Friburgo, writing from 1270 onwards. Pennaforte simply stated that in order to constitute affinity, a man had to ejaculate inside, not outside a woman's vagina, and that it was not sufficient that he penetrated her, but that he also had to "complete the act." De Friburgo became more graphic. "Completing the act," he specified in his glossa, must mean to release semen. He moreover discussed whether it was necessary that the woman as well as the man released her semen.[34] Friburgo probably implicitly assumed that semen was blood.[35] But it is worth noting that neither he nor any other of the early authors explicitly set the release of semen into the context either of mixing blood or of generating "common blood." Instead de Friburgo still says that the release of semen is necessary for man and woman to become *una caro*, one flesh.

In contrast, the authors of the fifteenth century often explicitly equate semen with blood, and they stress that the ejaculation of both woman and man is necessary precisely in

order for a *commixtio sanguinis* to take place. These authors also engaged in ever more graphic discussions of sexual intercourse, in order to assess under what condition blood actually is mixed. Certainly an *oscullum*, a kiss, said Henricus Greve, will not do, because it does not imply that the two bloods be mixed.[36] A new element in fifteenth-century treatises was the stress on the purely physical character of this merger, which was independent from consciousness; affinity is also constituted when one partner is violated, asleep, or unconscious in the moment the blood is mixed. Affinity, said Henricus Greve, "is made by blood, not by words".[37]

The stress on blood came with a sharper distinction between affinity and consanguinity as well as between different lines of descent. Between the thirteenth and the fifteenth century, the taxonomy of types of kinship (*cognatio*) repeated in most of the older treatises was overthrown. Authors writing up to the middle of the fourteenth century had distinguished three basic kinds of kinship, namely *cognatio legalis* that resulted from adoption, *cognatio spiritualis* that resulted from godparent relationships at baptism and confirmation, and *cognatio carnalis*. The latter was subdivided into consanguinity and affinity. While all authors of the period seem to have considered the distinction between spiritual and carnal kinship as fundamental, several of them blurred the line between affinity and consanguinity. For Thomas Aquinas both were similar in that they rested on relations of the flesh: "Husband and wife are made one flesh. Therefore if the husband is related in the flesh to all his kindred, for the same reason his wife will be related to them all."[38] And Raymundus Pennaforte used the word *consanguinitas* to designate a broad range of kin relationships, which later authors found objectionably unspecific. Thus, giving an example of how intercourse constitutes kinship, Pennaforte wrote: "when my sister sleeps with P, P becomes my consanguine." Pennaforte's Glossator Johannes de Friburgo, writing at the end

of the thirteenth century, felt he had to rectify this statement: "he is not becoming my *consanguineus*," he wrote, "such as my sister is, but my *affinis*."[39]

Treatises written from 1400 onwards no longer used the term *cognatio carnalis* and forwent any category that would have comprehended affinity as well as consanguinity. It would probably be an exaggeration to say that affinity and consanguinity now became as radical opposites as carnal and spiritual kinship had been before. But spiritual, legal, affinal, and consanguinial kinship were now all appearing on the same hierarchical level, indicating that each of them was equally different from all the others. Some authors writing around 1500 further dramatized the distinction between affinity and consanguinity. Lyntholtz explains that the ones who are related to us by descent, such as our children, belong to the same root and blood as we do, while those we marry or are related to through marriage are "quasi pinned on from the outside," *quasi extrinsecus adiuncta*.[40] This sentence was an unacknowledged quote from Thomas Aquinas. Lyntholz, however, omitted the preceding sentences (that I have rendered in the last paragraph) on how similar affinity and consanguinity are due to their relation to flesh. Thus, while Thomas Aquinas described a small difference between relationships that all were primarily carnal, Lyntholtz used Aristotle's words to establish a radical difference between those who truly belonged and the rest. Accordingly, Lyntholtz' remarks introduce an *arbor consanguinitatis* that operates with completely novel categories. Here, only a person's descendants are referred to as *consanguinei*, while his or her predecessors belong either to the category of *agnates* or the one of *cognates*.[41] This is a consistent continuation of the thought that kinship is based on shared blood. Strictly speaking, my blood, i.e. the exact mix of parental bloods running in my veins, is only contained in the blood of my descendants. In my ancestors' veins, in contrast, there is not running any of my blood, but rather its individual components, and the components coming from mother's side

and from father's side, have nothing in common. It can therefore seem to be in its place to keep the two strictly apart.

The new preference for metaphors alluding to sex as the process of mixing blood, rather than of uniting flesh, facilitated thinking descent in terms of a substance that is not simply either shared or not shared, but can be thinned out a little more with each generation. The treatise of Cyntholtz from just after 1500 was the first one to take up the interpretation that Thomas Aquinas long before had given of the statute of the Fourth Lateran council and its peculiar reference to the four elements contained in the human body. What authors around 1500 quoted was Thomas' saying that each generation comes about as the result of a mixture of one blood, which constitutes consanguinity, with a different blood, and the more often one mixes, the more different become the resulting bloods from the original one. Thus, Thomas went on, in the first generation the identity of blood disappears as to the first element, in the second generation as to the second element, and so on, until the identity has entirely vanished after four generations so that the original conjunction could be made again. Thomas had originally made this statement to contribute to a discussion of the cosmological foundations of the revised incest prohibitions of 1215.[42] Authors from around 1500 quoted the passage to solve a problem that had only become urgent against the background of a new understanding of kin as an actual group of people with mutual obligations. Authors of this period were worried that there had to be kinship among all people in the world, given that they all shared a portion, however small, of Adam's blood. Thomas' notion that shared blood is thinned when mixed with other blood allowed Lyntholtz to understand that love and friendship between kin decrease with each generation "and after some generations were not much larger than between complete strangers."[43]

Whence this new interest in blood? So far, I find the explanations about a growing appreciation of kinship offered by Anita Guerreau-Jalabert most convincing. In the

symbolism of Christianity and in particular in the Eucharist, in the couple blood/flesh, blood was the superior of the substances, the one standing for the more spiritual part of the body.[44] The argument could be strengthened if it were related to the increased importance of blood in the pious practices of the fifteenth century. As Caroline Bynum has pointed out, this was the period when blood moved to the core of Christians' concerns with holy matter, the possibility of God being inherent in matter, and of thinking body in different categories than the ones of flesh that was doomed to decay.[45] Against this contemporary backdrop, talking about kinship in terms of blood rather than flesh almost certainly indicated a higher valorization of kinship, even though there was nothing directly divine about the blood that was referred to as the principal substance kin shared.

Both substances of kinship, flesh and blood, had been thought of as immutable. But while "flesh" tended to be seen in opposition to "soul" and thus to be associated with the mortal, the corruptible, sin, and decay, blood allowed combining immutability with stability over time. In this respect it certainly matters that the Latin word *sanguis* referred to running blood only, while there was a different term, *cruor*, for clotted or dried blood. *Sanguis* had thus stronger associations than the modern English word blood with "alive" – which possibly paved the way for imagining that the blood of deceased ancestors was still alive in their descendants.[46] At any rate, the language of blood facilitated attributing to kinship the ability to constitute groups that lasted over generations, at least as far as kinship involved sharing blood, namely kinship by descent, was concerned. Moreover, blood–in contrast to flesh–could be thought of as pure or tainted.

At the end of the Middle Ages, even canon law specialists wrote about kinship no longer solely as profane structures to be avoided in marriage and sex, but as a dignified principle of social order. A higher valorization of kinship is also reflected in the purposes the *arbores* diagrams had to answer. Reference to kinship in terms of flesh coincided with the

almost exclusive use of the diagrams to measure the closeness of kin in order to prevent incest, i.e. ultimately in order to avoid kin. The emphasis on blood, in contrast, came with a new understanding of the diagram as a description of coherent kin groups, which allowed using it to keep kin groups together and apart from others.

The two concepts of flesh and blood were each prone to particular visions of kinship. To put it simply, the language of flesh tended to highlight sex and marriage, while speaking about blood placed more emphasis on descent. Speaking of flesh and its unification provoked associations of the act of sex and the mergence of a man and a woman. Speaking of blood and of mixing blood, in contrast, suggest that the significance of sex rests less in the mergence of the partners' bodies than in the mixture of their bloods—in their offspring. While the stark opposition between an exalted spiritual kinship and a depreciated carnal kinship of the High Middle Ages was whittled away, a new, also slightly hierarchic discrepancy made itself felt: the one between kinship by descent and kinship by alliance.

The shifts that emerge from treatises on the arbores can—with due precaution—be related to some general developments in the social organization and the cultural perception of kinship in the course of the later Middle Ages.[47] It is certainly too simple to describe these developments as a passage from cognatic to agnatic forms of kinship, as had been suggested by Karl Schmid and Georges Duby in the 1960s and 70s.[48] But a series of recent studies suggest that kinship in the central Middle Ages – and in many domains still in the late Middle Ages, too – was primarily conceived of as a an extended network of living people connected by marriage alliances as well as sibling and cousin relationships.[49] Such networks had little generational depth and their definition was not particularly concerned with keeping agnates and cognates or consanguines and affines apart, in the vernaculars these were often all indistinctively referred to as *amis* or *fründe*.[50]

At the passage to the Early Modern Period, novel conceptions emerged that primarily mattered in political representation, in the devolution of noble or patrician estates and the succession to offices. By and large, these new conceptions gave more weight to descent, generational depth, and the continuity of families over generations, lineages, and marked distinctions between affinity and consanguinity as well as between agnatic and cognatic ties.[51] We can associate the metaphors of flesh and of the unification of flesh through sex and marriage with the older system and its stress on marriages as central hitches in an extended network of kin related by a variety of different dyadic relationships. Metaphors of blood, in contrast, are adjusted to conceptions of kinship that attached greater importance to lineage, descent, the constitution of kin relationships around a patrimony that should be "kept within the family" over generations. Concepts of the bodily substances that kin are believed to share may be quite closely related to a completely different, but no less fundamental kind of "substances of kinship," namely the material privileges and property that circulate within and between families.

Conclusion

Arbores consanguinitatis have not always been family trees, and even less trees of blood relations. Both the comparisons of kinship diagrams with naturally grown trees and the association of kinship with blood were topics that became prominent in the commentaries on the *arbores* only shortly before the passage to the modern period. This was the result of several, closely related shifts in the way these treatises conceptualized kinship. The treatises from around 1200 were primarily interested in the *arbores* as instruments of categorizing individual kin relationships and of determining their closeness. This remained important later on, but both the blood and the tree metaphors seem to have emerged in the context of a new use of kinship and kinship diagrams to define coherent, stable forms of groups.

The new concepts of kinship based on shared blood largely replaced an older set of concepts highlighting flesh and the unification of flesh. The two concepts did not exclude, but rather limited each other. While the language of flesh laid emphasis on sex and marriage as the focal point of kinship organization, the language of blood gave more weight to descent and lines of descent that outlast generations. Speaking of blood, rather than of flesh, appears to liquidize the bodily substances of kinship, and to facilitate processes of mixing and dilution. Nevertheless, the notion of being of the same blood paved the way for very exclusive conceptions of belonging. Thus being of one blood, or of the right blood, became a precondition of belonging to the nobilities and patriciates at the passage to the early modern period, and the transmission of blood also played an important role in the emergence of concepts of ethnicity, race, and more recently, genetic identity. All of these concepts owe a great deal to developments in medieval theoretical thinking about kinship – a field that remains largely unexplored.

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